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SPECIAL REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMISSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

(transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Director of the Agency)

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

New York, 4 November 1955

Sir,

I am pleased to transmit herewith for the information of the General Assembly a special report submitted to me by the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The report was forwarded to me by the Chairman of the Commission under covering letter dated 24 October 1955, a copy of which is attached.

As indicated in the Chairman's letter, the representatives of Jordan and Syria approved the report subject to certain reservations which are set forth in letters to the Secretary of the Commission, copies of which appear as annexes A and B to the report.

At the time of writing of the Chairman's letter, the representatives of Egypt and of the United States of America had not signed the report. I have, however, been informed by the Secretary of the Commission that these representatives have now approved the report subject to the comments indicated in annexes C and D respectively.

With reference to the standard of relief services to be provided by the Agency, the General Assembly will recall that these matters were raised in the Director's annual report^{1/} and that, in paragraph 32 thereof, it was stated that they would be further discussed with the Advisory Commission before specific recommendations were made to the General Assembly. The views of the Advisory Commission on these matters are contained in paragraphs 10 to 13 of the report herewith transmitted.

(Signed) Henry R. LABOUISSSE

Director of the United Nations Relief
and works Agency for Palestine Refugees in
the Near East

The Secretary-General
United Nations
New York

^{1/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Tenth Session, Supplement No. 15, document A/2978.

LETTER DATED 24 OCTOBER 1955 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
ADVISORY COMMISSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND
WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST,
ADDRESSED TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE AGENCY

Beirut, 24 October 1955

I have pleasure in enclosing herewith the special report which the Advisory Commission has prepared on the work of UNRWA. As stated in the preamble, this report is submitted for your consideration and, if you deem it advisable, for transmission to the General Assembly. In this connexion I shall be glad to learn in due course what action you decide to take.

All members of the Advisory Commission have notified their approval of the report with the exception of Egypt and the United States of America, from whose representatives, at the time of writing, no reply has been received.

I wish to draw your attention to the fact that the approval of the representatives of Syria and Jordan has been made subject to certain reservations. These reservations are set out in letters addressed to the Secretary of the Commission of which I attach copies hereto.

In conclusion, I would like to express the Commission's warm appreciation of the valuable help and advice which you were good enough to give during their long discussions and which so very greatly facilitated their task of drawing up the report.

I am attaching a duplicate set of the enclosed documents in French language.

(Signed) I. NASEASHIBI
Chairman

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH-FRENCH

SPECIAL REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMISSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR
PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

I. INTRODUCTION

The Advisory Commission, having met at Beirut from 28 September to 13 October 1955 with the Director of UNRWA, submits to the Director the following observations for consideration and, if he deems it advisable, for transmission to the General Assembly.

1. The Advisory Commission has read with interest the annual report (A/2978) which the Director is submitting to the General Assembly. That report, in addition to containing information concerning developments during the past year, emphasizes the long-term nature of the refugee problem and suggests certain particular matters for consideration by the Assembly.
2. The Advisory Commission notes with regret that little progress has been achieved during the past year towards a basic settlement of the refugee problem. This continues to be a source of grave concern to the host countries and the contributing Governments as well as to the Agency.
3. The Advisory Commission recognizes the obstacles, mentioned in the Director's report to the realization of the goals established for the Agency by the General Assembly and expresses the hope that measures may be taken by all those concerned which will make possible the achievement of the tasks of the Agency.

II. RELIEF PROGRAMME

A. Relief recipients

4. The Advisory Commission recognizes that relief among the Palestine refugees will continue to be necessary for a fairly long time, whatever efforts are made, without prejudice to their rights recognized by General Assembly resolutions, to enable them to become self-supporting.
5. The definition of a person eligible for relief, as used by the Agency for some years, is one "whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum period

of two years preceding the outbreak of the conflict in 1948 and who, as a result of this conflict, has lost both his home and means of livelihood".

6. This definition is applied by the Agency in assessing applications from the refugees who have not found a new means of livelihood or have not been able to become self-supporting again in spite of Agency help. The Agency is in addition continuing, however, to provide partial relief services, originally made available by its predecessors, to a number of inhabitants of the frontier villages in Jordan who have lost their lands and means of livelihood but not their homes. There are still many other Palestinians in the same category who do not receive assistance from the Agency and who are in need.

7. There are substantial numbers of children of persons falling within the definition set forth in paragraph 5 above who do not receive rations at the present time. As early as last year, in their joint report,^{2/} the Director and the Advisory Commission expressed a desire to include these children among relief recipients. The reasons why relief was not granted to these children were set out in paragraph 21 of that report.

8. Therefore, in accordance with paragraph 6 of the General Assembly resolution 818 (IX) of 4 December 1954, the Director of the Agency, in consultation with the Advisory Commission, has prepared a report^{3/} on the case for assistance to new claimants, some of whom fall in the categories indicated above. This report, which the Commission notes with pleasure is an over-all objective study of the situation, describes in detail the case of new claimants. It is recognized that no assistance can be granted to these new claimants unless funds additional to the \$26,800,000 provided in the budget for 1955-1956 are contributed, except that, in the case of the children referred to in paragraph 7 above, rations can be granted in accordance with the terms and conditions of the proposal made by the Agency to the Government of Jordan, as set forth in section VI of the Director's report on new claimants. The Commission hopes that this report will

^{2/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Ninth Session, Supplement No. 17A, document A/2717/Add.1.

^{3/} Ibid., Tenth Session, Supplement No. 15A, document A/2978/Add.1.

be given serious consideration and suggests that the additional funds required might, in particular, be provided through implementation of the provisions of paragraph 18 hereunder and increased efforts on the part of the voluntary agencies.

9. The Commission is anxious to see expedited the issue to refugees of a special identity card ensuring recognition of their status as refugees and consequently of any rights which flow therefrom. The Commission also considers that a close collaboration between the Agency and the Governments of the host countries could improve the efficiency of the registration system.

B. Standard of relief services

10. The Advisory Commission has taken note of paragraph 13 of the Director's report (A/2978) concerning the scientific study to determine what if any change should be made in the quantity of food supplied to the refugees in order to provide a margin of safety. The Commission considers that no recommendation can be made on this matter until the study has been completed.

11. The Advisory Commission has made a thorough study of the Director's proposals on the improvement of relief standards. It recognizes that these proposals meet the obvious needs of the refugees. Accordingly, the Commission approves, subject to considerations set forth in paragraph 12 below, improvement of relief standards in the following respects and amounts:

1.	Supplementary rations for children	\$760,000	Recurrent annual cost
2.	Replacement of Bedouin tents	\$572,000	Annual cost for three years only
3.	Distribution of additional kerosene	\$220,000	Recurrent annual cost
4.	Improvement of individual refugee shelter in Gaza	\$193,000	One time cost

12. The Commission notes that the implementation of this programme of improvements will require funds additional to those requested for maintaining the normal services of the Agency, viz: \$26,800,000. It is, therefore, evident that the extent to which the programme may be implemented will depend on the amount of funds contributed additional to the \$26,800,000 required for the approved budget. The Commission consequently hopes that new sources of funds can be

found and suggests that if additional funds are contributed and if such additional funds are not sufficient to meet the costs of all the proposed improvements, the following order of priority should be adopted:

1. Supplementary rations for children.
2. Replacement of Bedouin tents.
3. Distribution of additional kerosene.
4. Improvement of individual refugee shelter in Gaza.

13. As regards the distribution of kerosene, the Advisory Commission suggests that this product should be contributed in kind by oil-producing countries and companies. The Commission therefore requests the Director to make a world-wide appeal to all oil-producing countries and companies and oil-marketing companies for gifts of kerosene for distribution to the refugees.

C. Financing of relief

14. The Advisory Commission has noted the Director's recommendation for an increase in funds available for working capital in the amount of \$14 million, on the grounds that the working capital presently available for operations is insufficient to finance relief operations pending the receipt of contributions. It further notes that the working capital designated for the rehabilitation programme has been used from time to time to finance relief operations until contributions were received. Since the balance of the working capital designated for the rehabilitation programme is being reduced as a result of expenditures on both projects and recurring annual expenditures on education and administration, funds used for financing relief from this source are not likely to be adequate to meet this requirement for a much longer period. Unless and until the Agency is to be liquidated it would be desirable to maintain the inventories and pipe-line at approximately the present level. Under these circumstances it appears that additional working capital will need to be found to maintain the Agency's current relief operations on an efficient basis, unless partial payments are made by contributors at the beginning of the fiscal year.

15. The Advisory Commission has noted that \$3 million in working capital is tied up in an irrevocable letter of credit under the terms of a procurement agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund. It considers that this

agreement should be renegotiated with a view to releasing a substantial portion, if not all, of this amount for current operations.

16. As one means of emphasizing the need for adequate funds to finance current operations, the Advisory Commission suggests that the Director should invite all contributing Governments to inform him of the dates on which payment of their contributions may be expected. On the basis of this information, the amount of working capital required can be more precisely ascertained.

17. The Advisory Commission further considers that the Director should be authorized, if necessary, to continue to draw temporarily upon the working capital funds designated for rehabilitation to finance current relief operations pending receipt of contributions. Inasmuch as the present balance in the rehabilitation account is not likely to be sufficient to cover present rehabilitation commitments and expenditures as well as temporary financing of the relief programme during the current fiscal year, it appears clear that further contributions and payments on existing pledges for rehabilitation will be required to finance the current level of operations.

18. The Advisory Commission notes that certain countries which appear to show interest in the refugee problem are either not on the list of contributing countries or have made only insignificant contributions. The Commission therefore requests the Director, in the full interests of the refugees, to bring this question to the attention of the Negotiating Committee for Extra-Budgetary Funds.

III. REHABILITATION

A. Refugee self-support

19. The Advisory Commission has noted the Director's observation concerning the attitude of refugees toward large-scale development programmes designed to provide refugee employment, and recognizes that their present attitude toward such development is conditioned in large part by the fact that a large proportion of the refugees have as yet had no alternative but idleness and dependence on UNRWA for a livelihood. On the other hand, the Advisory Commission has noted in the report of the Director that substantial numbers of refugees have found full or part time employment in certain areas. This manifestation of refugee initiative

in seeking employment wherever the opportunity exists is a most encouraging sign which augurs well for the large-scale development programmes presently envisaged by the Agency. Such initiative needs the greatest encouragement, since it is in the best interests of the refugees.

20. To this end the Advisory Commission considers that the employment services of the Agency should be expanded. Furthermore, the Governments in the Near East should make every possible effort to help any refugees desirous of working to take advantage of any employment opportunities made available to them without disturbing the local labour market. It is, of course, understood that the acceptance of such employment by the refugees does not prejudice their rights to repatriation or compensation. Moreover, the refugees should be free, on their own initiative, to accept such overseas employment opportunities as may be available to them.

21. The Director's report indicates that "at their most successful, the Jordan and Sinai projects should not be expected to absorb more than about 200,000 persons". In any event, in view of the time which must lapse before these projects can assure the refugees of complete independence, the natural increase of the refugee population during the coming decade will hardly be offset. Furthermore, long preliminary stages must be taken into account, since these projects have been planned for several years and, in spite of the time passed, it has not yet been possible to begin their implementation.

22. By drawing up an "Inventory of Major Economic Development Programmes and Projects in the Middle East", the Agency has paved the way for the more concrete task of choosing a few projects particularly suited to ensuring the rehabilitation, under the best conditions, of a large number of refugees. The criteria governing this choice should be the utility of the work to be done, the number of refugees who would benefit from it, and the per capita cost of such rehabilitation.

23. It would not be premature to begin this work immediately, since experience shows that the preliminary period necessary for the first studies, for preparing public opinion, and for obtaining governmental acceptance is likely to last several years. Furthermore, projects cannot be embarked upon without the agreement of the Near Eastern Governments concerned. It is hoped that the Governments concerned will facilitate these studies in order that new projects may be evolved and implemented at an early date.

B. Education and training

24. The Advisory Commission notes with satisfaction that most of the refugee children have availed themselves of the opportunity for an elementary education and recognizes that secondary education for qualified children is essential for them to take advantage of opportunities for employment requiring standard education qualifications.

25. While agreeing that the Agency's education programme is worthy of encouragement, the Advisory Commission notes that its expansion has a long-range effect and that once started future costs for this programme will increase. The Advisory Commission calls attention to the fact that the education programme involves recurring costs which were formerly charged to the relief budget but which are now charged to the rehabilitation account. In view of the fact that the expenditure on education during the past two years has constituted the largest part of withdrawals from the rehabilitation fund, the Advisory Commission considers that both the contributing and the host Governments should be fully aware of the implications of these expenditures in terms of a continuing programme with standards comparable to those of the host countries.

26. With regard to vocational training, the Advisory Commission considers that this programme should be expanded as rapidly as possible, to help meet the great demand for skilled workers throughout the Near East, and thereby assist in the acceleration of the economic development of the countries in the area.

27. This task of education and vocational training is particularly important in view of the remarkable fact that approximately half the refugees registered on the Agency's rolls - or 432,943 persons - are under fifteen years old.

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Done at Beirut, Lebanon, in the English and French languages, on
24 October 1955.

The Advisory Commission

(Signed)

Belgium	F. SEYNAEVE
Egypt	S. GOHAR
France	Abel VERDIER

The Advisory Commission

(Signed)

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan I. NASHASHIBI (with attached
reservations)

Lebanon G. HAIMARI

Syria Selim el YAFI

Turkey Refet BELE

United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland I. D. SCOTT

United States of America John D. TOMLINSON

ANNEX A

Letter dated 24 October 1955 from the representative of Jordan
on the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, addressed to the
Secretary of the Advisory Commission

With reference to the annual report of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA and the reservations which I made at the meetings pending submitting the matter to my Government, I am pleased to inform you that I am authorized to sign the report subject to the following reservations:

1. The Government of Jordan maintains the necessity of executing the resolutions of the United Nations pertaining to the return of the refugees to their homes (repatriation) and the payment of compensation to those who do not wish to return. The refusal of Israel to execute these resolutions is the reason why no solution has been found to the problem of the refugees.

2. The Government considers that the projects, assistance and services, of whatever nature, provided by the Agency must be regarded as temporary and in no way affecting the right of the refugees to repatriation and compensation.

3. The Government reserves the right of final decision on the implementation of each project as a matter of high policy, and will take such decisions in the light of public interest and the interests of the refugees.

4. All the services provided by the Agency to the refugees should be increased and improved.

5. Rations should be given to all children, to other refugee claimants who are not receiving rations, and to the inhabitants of the frontier villages.

I shall be glad if you will include these reservations in the report of the Commission and bring them to the notice of the Director.

(Signed) I. NASHASHIBI

Representative of Jordan on the
Advisory Commission

ANNEX B

Letter dated 21 October 1955 from the representative of Syria
on the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, addressed to the
Secretary of the Advisory Commission

I have pleasure in advising you that I have been authorized to inform the Advisory Commission that the annual report to the Director of UNRWA has been approved, subject to the following reservations.

1. The continued need for implementation of United Nations decisions on the repatriation of Palestine Arab refugees.
2. Efforts must be made to increase and improve all the Agency's services to Palestine refugees.
3. All services, assistance and projects, of whatever nature, must be considered as temporary and must not in any way prejudice the refugees' right to return to their homeland.
4. Final decisions regarding projects are governed by the Government's high policy; the Government therefore has the right to take decisions affecting the general interest and that of the refugees.
5. The Syrian authorities are prepared to co-operate with the Agency within the limits of the above reservations.

I would request you to advise all my colleagues on the Commission of the above, and to attach these reservations to the Commission's report. I further trust that they will be brought to the attention of the Director of the Agency. I should also be grateful if the Director would refer to these reservations if he deems it advisable to submit the Advisory Commission's annual report to the United Nations General Assembly.

(Signed) Selim el YAFI

Representative of Syria on the
Advisory Commission

ANNEX C

Extract from a telegram dated 31 October 1955 from the Secretary
of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, addressed to the Director
of the Agency

EGYPT HAS APPROVED ADVISORY COMMISSION REPORT WITH FOLLOWING RESERVATION
QUOTE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT DOES NOT APPROVE SECTION 3 (REHABILITATION) AS
STATED IN THE JOINT REPORT IN PARAGRAPHS 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. EGYPTIAN
GOVERNMENT VIEWS TOWARDS THIS SECTION ARE AS FOLLOWS: EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT
AGREES TO THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AS TEMPORARY MEANS OF EMPLOYING
REFUGEES WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THEIR RIGHTS OF REPATRIATION AND COMPENSATION
UNQUOTE.

ANNEX D

Extract from a telegram dated 27 October 1955 from the Secretary
of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, addressed to the Director
of the Agency

UNITED STATES HAS ACCEPTED ADVISORY COMMISSION REPORT ON THE UNDERSTANDING
QUOTE THAT THE DESIRE OF THE UNITED STATES FOR ADEQUATE STANDARDS OF RELIEF
FOR THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES DOES NOT IMPLY A COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF THE
UNITED STATES AS TO ANY PARTICULAR LEVEL OR TYPE OF CONTRIBUTION TO UNRWA
UNQUOTE SIGNATURE JOHN D. TOMLINSON MAY THEREFORE BE ADDED
